1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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penalty was not only enforced against improper marriage, but even against illicit intercourse on the part of persons within the forbidden limits. Mr. Lyon related to me a case that occurred since he has been living in the country, where the power of the Chief Chirimo was insufficient to protect a man who married his second or third cousin. Fortunately for the delinquents, they succeeded in making their escape, though with difficulty, being followed two or three days' journey by the avengers. 582 684

Infidelity is not rare, and the husband has the redress of whipping the woman and dismissing her if he desires, and of whipping her paramour if he is able. But so cautious are the people about the blood limit of intermarriage, that a woman on giving birth to an illegitimate child, for fear that it will not know the family to which it belongs, will usually brave the punishment, and at once confess its paternity. 837 684 [848]

As cousins are called brother and sister, so are not only the brothers and sisters, but even the cousins of a wife or husband all called indiscriminately brother and sister-in-law; so that a person may on a single marriage find that he has annexed fifty or a hundred of these interesting relations. 601

On the death of the head of the family, the next oldest brother, or in default of a brother, a cousin or uncle assumes his place, and is then called father by the children. This does not involve any especial material duties, such as the support of the family; but is rather a sort of honorary title; giving him, however, the ruling voice in any family council or discussion. 593 768

On the death of an individual; if a young person, a woman, or a person of but little consequence, the body is prepared as soon as possible in the manner described below, and carried to the forest; but if a person of more consideration, there are some preliminary ceremonies. These I had the opportunity of witnessing in the case of an old man who died on the Uren when I was present. He belonged to one of the distinguished families, an ancestor, perhaps his father, having been one of the leaders in the war with Tiribi, and he the heir to, and possessor of, one of the few gold "engles," or insignia of rank. He died in the night, and next morning, the body being in his hammock, covered with a piece of bark cloth; all of the chicha, chocolate, and food that the poor people of the house could get together on short notice were prepared. A fire was lighted, amidst singing, by twirling a pointed stick in a s cket on the face of another. This was the sacred fire, which was communicated to a small heap of wood placed on one side in the house. This could be used for no common purpose whatever. No ordinary fire could be lighted from it; not even could one use a stick of it to light his pipe. It must burn continuously for nine days. In case of its accidentally going out before that time, it must be relighted in the same manner as at first; and at the end of that time, only a priest could extinguish it, and he only with a calabash of chocolate, and during, or at the end rather, of the suitable incantation. 764 766 [372] [784]

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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764 768 The custom of burying or otherwise placing with the dead all of his valuables, evidently existed at one time with these people. The Tiribis, who bury their dead, did so, up to within the memory of persons still living, and all matters that could not be buried, like live stock, fruit trees, &c., were ruthlessly destroyed. A more practical method has grown up [428] with the present generation, and they now divide the property of the defunct among the heirs, with as much avidity as in more enlightened communities. So do the Bri-bris and Cabecars, but these compound with their consciences. Whether the Teribis have a similar custom, I am not prepared to say, not having seen a funeral, and having no information that I consider sufficiently trustworthy.

766 The next step after lighting the fire, was for the master of ceremonies, appointed by mutual consent, to cause to be collected some small scrapings of a peculiar wood, called Palo Cacique by the Spaniards. It is a wood used only for walking sticks, and will be again referred to in that connection. He also obtained a large lump of cotton wool, some seeds of a species of pumpkin, and a small root of sweet yucca. All the male friends of the deceased present, seated themselves on low benches in a double line, facing each other, with another bench between. A part of the cotton, spread out so as to make a bulk about the size of a man's hand, was placed in front of the principal person, who then began in a sing-song tone between a recitation and a chant, to relate the merits and deeds of their departed brother. As he proceeded, and mentioned for instance that he had planted much corn, he laid carefully on the cotton a piece of shaving which he said was the "planting stick" used in that operation. Another laid aside of it a piece of pumpkin seed, which represented the corn. Another taking up the song, related how he had shot fish, and another shaving was the arrow. An impromptu string a couple of inches long, twisted out of the cotton, and stained red with the powder from some annatto seeds, was a rope with which he had led a cow, bought years before in Terraba. This lasted for an hour, until every tool or weapon he had ever used was represented by a little pile of seeds and shavings on the cotton. But he was a great man and his "eagle" was not to be forgotten. A very rude imitation of it was cut out of the skin of the yucca root and placed on top of all his other property, and then the edges of the cotton were doubled over making all into a ball. This was placed on his breast, next his body, and he was thus armed and equipped with all he had used or owned in this world, ready for use in the other; and his heirs none the poorer.

The body was then enveloped in the piece of "mastate" or bark cloth that he had used as a blanket, together with the hammock in which he swung. A quantity of "platanillo" leaves, a leaf not unlike that of the plantain, but only half the size and much tougher, were placed on the ground, two or three deep. The bundle was laid on this, the edges of the leaf envelope, doubled over, and dexterously tied by strips of bark string and the whole turned out a very respectable Egyptian mummy done in

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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green. By means of three strings, this was swung under a pole, ten feet long, raised on the shoulders of two men, who trotted off unconcernedly to the woods a mile or so distant. They were accompanied by two or three more, armed with machetes. 766

A little boy whom I had for a servant for a few months, died on one of my journeys. We watched by him and did all in our power to save him, and were assisted by two of our men, one of whom was an "*awa*" or doctor. As soon as we saw that he was dying, and I had given up the last hope, the *awa* took charge. He motioned us all off. From that moment the moribund becomes unclean and only the *awa* can touch him. As soon as we pronounced him dead, the doctor covered him up. Next morning, the death taking place about midnight, without ceremony he was bundled up in his blanket and the usual leaves, and carried off in the same manner to the bush. But he was of no consequence. Only a boy who was nobody and had done nothing. I mention this case to show the difference in treatment, according to the person. 764

Next to a woman in her first pregnancy, the most *bu-ku-ru'* (unclean) thing is a corpse. An animal that passes near one after it is placed in its temporary resting-place, is defiled forever, and must be killed, as unfit for food. Accordingly, an unfrequented spot is selected, where tame pigs or cattle never go. Here a low bench is made of straight sticks, about the size of a coffin, raised a foot or two from the ground; it is carefully fenced in; the corpse is laid on it, and the whole is then covered with another horizontal layer, making a sort of box, carefully bound together with vines. Over all, a pile of branches and brush-wood is thrown so that buzzards and other carrion-eating animals cannot obtain access to the body. The body remains here about a year, to allow complete decomposition. 764 783

In the meantime, the family, or next of kin, on whom devolves the responsibility, proceeds to secure a sufficient number of animals, pigs, or beeves, according to the importance of the defunct. He also plants a corn-field, to supply the material for the chicha. About a year, more or less, after the death, one or more priests are engaged. Generally one is sought and he selects his assistants. For an ordinary person, one is sufficient; while for a chief, or person of distinction half-a-dozen are hardly enough. The chief fixes the time when he will be ready. Another official, a steward, called *Bi-ka'-kra* is also engaged. This latter personage takes entire charge as commissary and master of ceremonies. Under his direction, the corn is ground for the chicha. The number of bunches of plantains that he orders, is obtained; the animals are killed and cooked as he directs; and the food and drink are served to whom, and in what quantities he designates. The host resigns all to him and becomes thenceforth merely a guest, until all is over. 764

When the day approaches, a party goes to the place where the body was deposited. One person, set apart for similar unclean work, opens the package, cleans and re-arranges the bones and does them all up in a

1;Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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764 bundle about two feet long; enveloped in a piece of cloth of native make, prepared by being painted in an allegorical manner.

These cloths, about four feet long by two wide, are painted with a red vegetable juice, in figures two to four inches long. The devices vary according to the cause of the death of the individual; whether it be from fever or other disease, old age, snake bite, wounds, &c. One of these cloths, in the Smithsonian museum, is painted for a person who is supposed to have died from snake bite.

The bones, having been tied up in the new bundle, are carried, again under a pole, to the house where the feast is to be held, and are there placed on a little rack overhead, out of the way of persons passing underneath.

Everything being ready, the first installment of food cooked, the chicha brewed, and chocolate boiled, the feast begins.

[123] I had the rare good fortune, not only to witness the ceremony at the death of the persons mentioned above, but also to be present at the death feast of the chief Santiago. That is to say, I saw all that happened on the first and the last days; the intervening thirteen or fourteen being all alike; a succession of eating, drinking, dancing; a disgusting scene of carousal and debauch that did not possess even the merit of variety.

766 The feast was held in a large house, adjoining the residence of the chief Birche. The house is about seventy-five feet long and forty wide; the ends being round, and the only light entering by the large doorway left open at one end. A little rack, made of wild cane was tied up to the sloping side of the house, about eight feet from the floor, and on this was laid the bundle containing the disjointed skeleton of the murdered chief. At a given signal, the principal singer or priest took his position on a low stool, flanked by the other priests and some volunteers. All were regaled with chocolate served in little gourds. The priest began a low chant and two men started twirling the stick to light the fire. As fast as one tired,

[372] another took his place until the sparks glowed in the pit bored in the lower stick. A yell from the priest announced this, and a piece of cotton wool was ignited from the burning dust; with this the fire-wood, previously prepared, was lighted and the fire placed under the remains. Here it was kept up until the end of the feast. After the lighting of the fire, singing and dancing began in earnest, interrupted occasionally by eating and drinking.

766 534 535 The dances are very similar; the principal differences visible to an observer are in the disposition of the dancers, whether in a circle or in one or two straight lines. In the latter case, the two lines are parallel, and the dancers face each other. The dancing is kept up to the "music" of small drums, carved out of a solid piece of wood, with a single head, made of the belly skin of the iguana; the other end is open. The drum is held under the left arm, and is beaten with the tips of the fingers of the right hand. The drummers, ranged in a line, sing a monotonous song, with a chorus; the time being beaten on the drums. Sometimes a

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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The final disposal of the remains is a matter of great care. The whole of the tribe goes to the district of Bri-bri for this purpose. The receptacle is a square pit, about four feet deep and ten feet square. This is paved on the bottom with stones, and is roofed over from the weather, by a series of heavy hewn slabs of a very durable wood, open on the front and ends, and sloping to the ground at the back. Each family possesses one of these pits and here, after the funeral feast, the bundle of bones is carried and deposited. After the rest, the remains of Santiago were carried to the "royal" pit and deposited without further ceremony. 764 ●

The Cabecars, according to Mr. Lyon, have about the same ceremony, but their pits are mere holes, not paved, and covered by planks laid on the ground level.

The Tiribis have a death feast, but it differs in some respects from the others. The body is buried immediately after death, but no longer with the property of the deceased, and, of course, the defunct is not present at his final feast, as with the Bri-bris.

Mr. Lyon, to whom I owe much of the information in the present memoir, has described to me one circumstance, in connection with these death feasts, that I have not witnessed. The warriors among the Bribris, who fought in the war with the Tiribis were honored with a little different ceremonial. They are now all gone, and the ceremony is extinct. At the death feast, a person entered, clad in a long gown, wig, and mask. The gown and wig were made of mastate, or bark cloth, covered with "old man's beard" moss, sewed all over it, making a shaggy and nearly shapeless mass. The mask was made of half a "tree calabash," properly fixed up with a wax nose, &c. A copy of this entire dress was made for me by an old Indian, and is now in the Smithsonian museum. The person thus accoutred, took part in the dance, made free with the women and scared the children without let or hindrance. Mothers with young children took them to him and placed them for a moment on his shoulder, "to prevent the evil spirit from doing them harm." Neither Lyon nor the Indians could give me a very clear account of what spirit, whether good or evil, this represented. But the people seemed to regard him as rather of the malevolent sort; to be classed under the general head of "*Bi*" or Devil. Doubtless this, at one time had a distinct meaning, now lost. 766 [532]

No strictly religious belief can be said to exist among these Indians, in the sense that it is usually understood among us. They have, however, a series of ideas or beliefs which affect their daily lives and are never lost sight of. In connection with the funeral feast, described above, I have referred to their idea of a future state. 771

During the year that the body lies in the woods, the disembodied spirit prowls around, living on wild fruits, of which the wild cacao is the only one of which I know the name, although others were also pointed out to me. At the end of that time, when the funeral fire is kindled, the spirit is thus attracted to the feast, whence it departs on its final journey. 775

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

763 it must be burnt to destroy the influence of evil spirits, and the place must be abandoned. After the death, a certain officer

●764 [767] called the *oko* is called in, he being the only person who can handle the dead without being defiled. The *oko* wraps the corpse in bark blankets and plantain leaves, and places with it the hammock in which the deceased breathed his last, as well as any other household objects associated with him at death. The *oko* then removes the body to a small platform in the woods, surrounded by a fence built to keep out animals, and roofed with thatch. Some of the natives also declared that this scaffold is densely covered with thorny vines, trained to grow over it. In this temporary tomb the body remains for five years, when it is removed to the communal house of the dead.

Quenching the Fire.—Nine days after the death, a ceremony called *Apagando el fuego*, or "Quenching the Fire," is held, which lasts only one night. The women of the family prepare chicha, cacao, and other materials for a feast, and the *tsûku*,

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or "doctor," who "owns" the ritual for this rite, is summoned. When the *tsúku* appears, he sings certain secret songs, accompanied by the calabash rattle, without the aid of an assistant. He next makes a ceremonial fire, lighting it by means of a fire-drill rolled between the palms of his hands. The *tsúku* then scrapes some powder from a "caçique" stick and puts a pinch on various utensils which had belonged to the deceased and which are still in the house. At each application of powder he sings and shakes his rattle. Later he puts some of the powdered *caçique* in a package and places it on a wooden stool before him, while he sits on another seat and chants. When this rite is finished, the *tsúku* gets some water in plantain leaves and pours it on the fire, ending the ceremony. After this, say the Indians, the relatives of the dead "have no fear of the fire."

Bone Dance.—A ceremony called *Baile de los Huesos*, or "Bone Dance," is held five years after the corpse is put away on the little scaffold in the jungle, when the flesh is completely gone. The ceremony

2;Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

764 lasts from fifteen to twenty-two days. The family of the deceased spend all they can on the feast. Chicha and cacao are prepared in large quantities, and animals are killed. The *oko* who "owns" this function is sent for, and the *tsúku* is hired to sing, accompanied by two attendants. All three of these latter bear rattles, while various others, the number of whom is not specified, beat drums. All day long the *tsúku* and his attendants make music while the guests and mourners feast. On the last day all the guests leave, and the *oko* and the mourners remove the skeleton from its temporary grave in the woods and wrap it in a bark blanket. The bundle is carried out into the woods a short distance from the camp, where a private ceremony is held, of which details could not be gathered. After this rite the bones are taken to the dead-house, situated far off in the mountains.

346 764 This dead-house is made of a durable wood called *madera del campo santo*, "cemetery wood," which, even in the tropical jungles, is well-nigh imperishable. This

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

house, according to the informants, is divided into four rooms, each reserved for one of the four geographical groups of the Bribri, residing on the Lari, Tiliri, Uren, and Coen rivers—four upper tributaries of the Sixaola. The roof of the charnel house is not thatched; but it was not certain, from the description of the natives, whether it was otherwise roofed. What they said was that it is completely made of *madera del campo santo*, which may mean that the house has a puncheon roof. The bones of the dead are stored in the room appropriate to their local band, and with them are placed bows, arrows, and various utensils.

Gabb,[30] who was able to witness the Bribri mortuary ceremonies personally, gives an excellent account, not differing materially from the data furnished by the writer's informants. He states that the funeral fire was kept burning for nine days, and during that time it could not be used for any purpose. At the end of the allotted period only the *tsáku* could extinguish it, and then with a calabash of chocolate. Gabb adds that instead of sacrificing the

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actual implements of the deceased, cacique-wood powder was placed on crude models of his property, including his golden eagle, and these were wrapped up in cotton wool and placed with the body, to symbolize his earthly possessions. The body was then enshrouded in a bark blanket and the dead man's hammock, and the whole enveloped in platanillo leaves, swung under a pole, and carried out to a previously prepared scaffold in the jungle.

The next of kin then commenced gathering material for the bone feast, and a year or less (not five years, as said by my informants) thereafter the ceremony was held. An official called *bikakra* took charge of the feast, and a party was sent to collect the bones. Here a specially appointed person, who was apparently absolved from the taint of touching the dead, opened the bundle, cleaned and rearranged the bones, and rewrapped them in a cloth of native make and decorated in an allegorical manner.

"These cloths," says Gabb, "about four feet long by two wide, are painted with a

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

red vegetable juice, in figures two to four inches long. The devices vary according to the cause of the death of the individual; whether it be from fever or other disease, old age, snake bite." 764

The bones were kept in the house on a rack of cane during the ceremony for two weeks or more. The final rites consisted of a ritualistic chant, by the shaman, describing the journey of the deceased to the other world, the dangerous rivers he had to cross, beset by alligators, by great serpents which lay in his path, and by fearful precipices. But the journey was not to be altogether dreadful, for beautiful birds, butterflies, and flowers were to be encountered, the song closing with a description of final arrival of the departed and reception in the Hereafter, where he would have nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy himself in the realm of the god *Sibú*. 764 775

The fire was then extinguished, and the skeleton ceremonially conducted to its final resting place, amid a partial destruction of the property of the deceased, after which the bones were taken to the death house. 764

586 nowadays it does exist particularly amongst the Indians who have contact with the *ladino*-populated coast. Formerly, it was unknown, but today a man leaves a woman, or a woman a man, if they feel like it.

764 Death. Whatever ceremonies existed amongst the *Boruca* in regard to death have almost entirely disappeared. It is interesting that the *Boruca* do not cry at funerals. At the [556] wake, there is a feast the size of which depends upon the economic status of the deceased. Coffee and chicha are always served as drinks. The women put the body, at times with the hands folded as in prayer, on a long wooden bench or on wooden tablets, and cover it with any piece of cloth available. Three candles are placed alongside the body, one at each side of the face and one at the end. Sometimes, a candle is put by the feet. Prayers are recited all night during the wake. In the morning, men tie the body with fiber rope to the bench or planks, fastening to them two poles horizontally to serve as handles, and generally carry the whole to the church. Here an Indian, the warden, officiates in the absence of the priest. After the Mass, or the few prayers if there is no priest, the body still on the bench (see fig. 10, *a*), and still covered with cloth, is carried by the men to the cemetery, friends of the dead following. Here, bench and all, it is deposited in a shallow grave (about 4 feet), and very infrequently, leaves or flowers are scattered over or placed on it. When the deceased leaves no relative, his extra clothes are placed under his body and used as a bed in the grave. If the dead has enjoyed a good
766 position within the community during life, then a small tunnel is made in a side of the grave, and the body is placed there. This is called a "tomb." When a child dies, the body is tied in a white cloth and the one accordion in the village is played all the way to the graveyard. The whole town accompanies the body.

769 One year after the death of an individual, the *Boruca* celebrate what is known as the "birthday" of the death. Another feast is given at the house of the deceased. This feast must have a lot of chicha, and often lasts until the following morning or until the chicha disappears.

[p. 22-B]

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949

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Boruca

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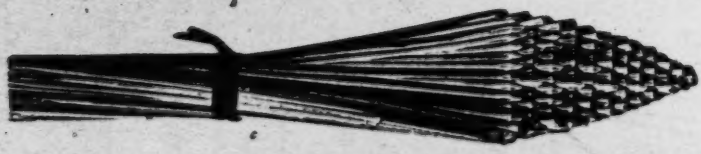

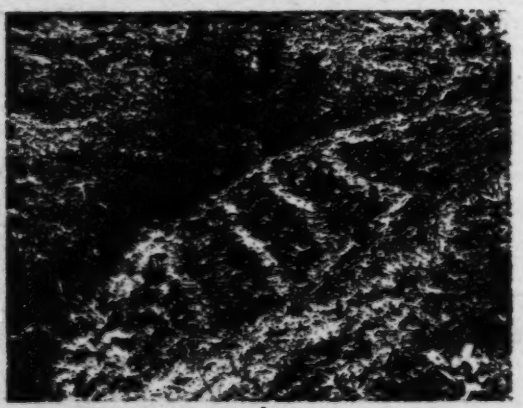

a, Funeral of a woman. b, Mask used in New Year's celebration. c, Screw measure (⅓ actual size). d, Rattles or measures with bone handles. e, Remains of contour agriculture on the savanna.

[p. 60]

[P. 29 (A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19 Bribri Cabecar

584 asks his parents. There have been a few cases in this area when permission was denied. Then, [583] the couple ran away to other indigenous communities of different tongues, for example, the Cabécares among the Bribri or vice versa. The writer does not know of similar cases in Talamanca.

583 When the answer is satisfactory, the couple 591 live from eight days to one year in trial marriage in the house of the girl. The boy works for her family cultivating the land, chopping wood, etc., until he takes his woman away to his parents' home. He must also give the girl material for dresses which she makes into clothes. If he already has a wife then he gives [595] a present of food or animals to the new woman's family and visits her periodically until he feels it is time to take her to his home or his parents' home.

583 On the Pacific side, social pressure against trial marriages is at times evidenced by the [184] contemporaries of the couple, not by their [177] elders. This is due to the influence of the school. Here when first married, the pair 591 generally stay in the house of the father of the boy, although this is not a set rule. The length of time they live there depends upon the father's age. However, from six to eight years is not uncommon. If the mother of the girl is poor and a widow, the couple go to live with her. If while living with either family on the Pacific slope, one of the pair does not get along with the prospective in-laws, they build a house apart but close to the parents. Eventually on this site, the man builds his own home.

595 In Ujarrás, there are several cases among the Cabécares of a woman and two or three men living in the same house. The woman washes and cooks only when she feels like it. When she doesn't the men take care of her.

586 On both sides, the men do not like their women to travel alone for fear they might go off with another man. When a woman leaves her husband, the children stay with the father.

182 **Death and Burial.** The most important phase 761 of the life cycle as far as ceremony and prestige are concerned is death. This is when social organization flanked by the unanswerable or mysterious aspects of religion combine in a pageant that might well put to shame many 764 theatrical producers. In the first place, there

[P. 29(B)] SA19 Talamanca SA19

Bribri
Cabecar

764 are two ceremonies connected with death. The first takes place when the individual dies, and
[765] the second and most important is held about a year later and can be called a bone funeral as well as burial. During each there is a feast at which the remains of the deceased are present. It must be remembered that the basis
764 of society among the Talamancans is the matri-
614 lineal clan. The laws governing such an organization require strict adherence to one's blood group even after death. Each clan, therefore, has its own communal grave called in both languages a *pų* (*see* Funeral and Bone
764 Burial). According to the Bribri, the custom of a communal grave was started by the Singers (*see* The Singers) who were also responsible for the respect given the clan. They say that the *pų* are only about 200 years old. Among the Cabécar, they are not stone lined at the bottom and are covered by rough planks on top. The Bribri have a more elaborate design which includes a stone floor and a slanting wood covering which is left open at the front. It would be unpleasant to say the least to open a communal grave each time a member of the clan died. It would be worse when epidemics prevailed. The only solution then, if the society demands segregation on the basis of maternal blood, is to bury a person when there is no longer a trace of odoriferous material present, or, in other words, to bury clean bones. This is why the first step after death is to wrap the body in
[775] *bijagua* leaves, with, of course, the proper articles for the comfort of the spirit, and to place the package in the woods where it is well protected by briars and cut branches
765 from rapine birds and beasts. After a year, when all the flesh has disappeared, the leaf bundle is opened and rearranged by the proper authorities and a package of bones wrapped in cloth is deposited for permanent rest in the clan grave where there is no risk of sin against the existing social order (*see* Social Organization).

764 On the Pacific slope, where the school has
[177] undertaken an educational program to in-
[871] corporate the Talamancans into the Costa Rican republic, cemeteries, sanctioned by the Ministry of Public Health and blessed by the Roman Catholic priest, have been started. A description of a Pacific burial will be given

764 later. Here it is necessary to note, however,
[178] that certain vestiges of traditional customs persist, at least among the Bribri of Cabagra. When a person has been dead and buried a
[765] year, he is exhumed and replaced in the same grave.

767 **Official Participants in Death and Burial Rites.**
764 There is an elaborate group of officials connected with death and burial rites even today. Each division requires certain preparation by the individual taking part in the rites. In a sense, these participants can be classed as lay clergy. These "professionals," if so they can be called, are of utmost importance when one
[784] realizes that the dead are strictly tabu to the non-initiated. If, by any ill luck, a person
[783] should touch someone dead, a three-day purification ceremony is absolutely essential or misfortune will befall him. This is true of both slopes of the range.

[756] The principal figure in these rituals is the medicine man, known in Bribri and Cabécar as the *jaʉ́* (*see* The Medicine Man). Next in importance today is the Burier (*see* The Buriers) who handles and wraps the dead. Then follow the Singers (*see* The Singers) whose place is now generally taken by the
[756] medicine man as well as that of the Preparer of Feasts. A medicine man, particularly on the Pacific side, functions in all of these positions. Among the Cabécar, there is a minor group known as the *já*, and among the Bribri the *ǯarichək*, who need no special training but who prepare the things for the dead to take with them *without* touching the body.

[756] The preparation and position of the medicine man is treated under religion because in addition to his curing abilities, he personifies the last remaining vestiges of former credences and priesthood.

The other officials in connection with death and burial have duties concerned solely with these operations. They do not seem to form part, as has been said by some, of the priesthood, but do have a decided social position
[554] because of their task.

767 **The Buriers.** They are known as *ókub* or *ókum* in Bribri and *kerí* in Cabécar. They are
[756] the only people, aside from the medicine man who is all important, who can touch the dead. They must also light the funeral fire. They are
[825] the only non-clergy who can touch a buzzard or a possum.

767 always confined to funeral ceremonies where
533 they chanted the deeds and merits of the de-
[775] ceased as well as sped the soul along on its
journey to the other world through song. The
[614] Bribri Singers came from the *stsukur* or *stu'gur* clan according to Gabb and Pittier,[105] but the elders and medicine men in 1956 claimed that they belonged to the *síbəwak*, *korrebué*, or *sinąbwak* groups. Gabb states that their office
[428] was hereditary,[106] and that they were next to the *usegLa* in importance. Pittier suggests heredity [107] and notes that they lived only by the lower Coen and had a number of assistants the highest of whom were called *ko*, and apprentices known as *siní*.[108] He adds that elaborate preparation was necessary before the title of Singer was won. This is not exactly in keeping with the idea that their position was hereditary.

[614] Cabécar Singers had to come from the following clans: *kibegruwák*, *síbəwak*, *bLeriwak*, and *sənítswa* (*see* The Clans and Myths: *Protectors of Clans*). Their name in this language is *səgLə*.

[198] Gabb,[109] speaking only about the Bribri, calls attention to the fact that the songs of *stsukur* were in a language which neither he nor the uninitiated could understand. As Lehmann has pointed out, however, the Bribri Singers were in reality a Cabécar group,[110] according to his spelling and that of Pittier, the *korrbué*. We use *korrebué* because this is the pronunciation given by the Bribri today. There is, nevertheless, another angle to this problem, particularly if one accepts the statement that the Bribri Singers could come from one of the three clans mentioned above. This
[198] is the use of a "sacred language" by the
[177] medicine men of both Talamancan peoples when singing and the adoption of foreign songs even by the laymen. These aspects will be discussed later under Curing and Songs, respectively.

● 764 The Pacific Bribri and Cabécares, in lieu
756 of Singers, have a ceremony called *setébuwak*
184 in Bribri which is carried out by the medicine man when someone dies (*see* First Burial).

[105] Gabb, 1875, p. 508; Pittier, 1938, p. 17.
[106] Gabb, 1875.
[107] Pittier, 1895, p. 18.
[108] Pittier, 1938, pp. 17–18. Could there be a connec-

6:Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962
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767 **The Organizer of Feasts.** This position is
● 764 common to both Talamancan peoples and is covered by a single title, *bikë'kra*. One has to study to achieve it.[111] The principal tasks of the Organizer of Feasts is at the death of an individual to designate the persons who must
[273] plant the maize to be used for the chicha at the time of the bone funeral; to name those who are to make it; and those who have to provide chocolate, plantains, pigs, etc., for the
[756] feast. On the Pacific slope, this position has also been absorbed by the medicine man.

764 **The já.** Back in the woodland, however, where authorities and visitors are scarce, the method of handling the dead adheres to former
[775] usage. Things must be prepared for the soul of the deceased. This is done by those known as the *já:* three adults if an adult died, or three girls, or three boys, such as the case may be. Cotton must be placed inside the body bundle of a woman. Combs and other ornaments are carried apart with the clothes of the dead. Even if a person has a lot of clothes, all are put in the grave. If a boy dies, a miniature bow and arrow are substituted for the cotton. But when the deceased is a man, in addition to this, they place a miniature blow gun, fish hook, and digging stick in the bundle. This
[768] is done in order to leave the real ones for the family's use. A net carrying bag is also placed with the dead man.

[767] **First Burial.** When death takes over, the entire retinue of officials begin their work. Of course, customs vary depending upon the
[656] geographical location. Government and eccle-
[797] siastical authorities have prohibited the fundamental part of the ancient rites, that is, the keeping of the dead for a year before burial. Usually, the body is left in the house for about twenty-four hours by both the Bribri and Cabécar who are located near non-indigenous villages on the Caribbean side. The personal belongings of the deceased, either in effect or symbolically, and cacao paste are placed beside the corpse which is then wrapped in *mastate* (*see* Bark Cloth) and tied with a cotton string made especially for this purpose

[767] [533] tion between *sini* and *sinąbwak?* (*See* Social Organization.)

[110] Gabb, 1875, p. 508.
[111] Lehmann, 1920, vol. 1, p. 220.
[112] Pittier, 1938, p. 17.

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764 (*see* Fibers). They cover the bark cloth with the leaves of white *bijagua* (*murksí*) and tie it again with the special string. Leaves of the [824] white *bijagua* are essential for the dead. They [264] are not used to wrap or serve food as is the black *bijagua* (*bikuLəkə*) because they have a faint taste and odor. After the feast the bundle is "buried" in the forest. In effect, it is covered with briar bushes and branches or is even placed in a shallow grave.

Gabb [112] gives a description of two deaths he witnessed among the Bribri in the second half of the past century.

In 1947, the writer had the opportunity to be present at a ceremony for a little girl in Cabécar, the account of which follows. When we arrived at the house, a small ceremonial fire called *hamburu* had been made and beside it the *já* had placed a gourd filled with water. As we entered, they put another gourd filled with *chilate*, a preparation of ground maize, ripe bananas, and water, on a white *bijagua* leaf by the fire as well as a cotton burr and a little raised-rim grinding stone with a pestle on top.

Some cotton without seeds was tied with *pita* to a stick. There was also a *mochila* or net carrying bag with two small gourds filled with ground cacao and ground maize, respectively (fig. 11, *b*). The belief is that the soul goes 775 below where the sun comes from. When the sun rises, the soul goes along with it to the sky but always returns below. The food set by the fire is needed for this journey.

764 The *bika'kra* or Organizer of the Feast put this food on the raised shelf where the body was lying hidden by a banana leaf screen made with a pole frame. Then he undertook the task of seeing that there was enough food for the people present.

The grieved mother, a widow, remained apart from everyone, sitting at the very edge of the house, grimly silent. As long as the dead was there, custom decreed that she could not do a thing, neither eat, except to drink chocolate, nor talk at length. She also had to be bathed with hot water by a woman after the body was removed. Meanwhile the Organizer of Feasts arranged the banquet which various women were preparing over a big fire inside the house. He also fixed the raised shelf which was rather fragile.

[112] Gabb, 1875, pp. 497-99.

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765 Death feasts depend upon the means of the family of the deceased. On this occasion there were chocolate and coffee, plantains roasted in their skins, chickens, and pigs.

●764 When it came time for the body to be bundled for disposal, the mother lay down on leaves and wrapped herself in *mastate* after which she remained motionless as if no longer alive.

The Burier, aided by a boy apprentice, [868] took leaves of the white *bijagua* and passed them over the fire so that they became soft and pliable. He sat on a low bench and removed the thickest part of the stem with a machete, putting the prepared leaf on another bench in front of him. He also had vines to tie the outer part of the bundle and wide pieces of bark cloth to cover the whole.

The Burier, the Organizer of Feasts, and the mother were given a drink of chocolate in [415] boat-shaped cups made of black *bijagua* leaves. The mother sat up quickly when offered the drink and moaned out loud in a little singsong artificial voice. When she finished the chocolate, she said a few words of thanks to the people present and became silent again.

The Burier washed his hands with water from a gourd and piled the banana leaves from the *tapesco* screen on the ground. He measured the size of the body with a stick and with a leaf. Then he put wide strips of *burío* fiber over the leaf.

[177] An old woman, dressed in machine-made material decorated with a striped design to [767] resemble a woven skirt, appeared as a professional mourner. While the Burier proceeded with his preparations, she went into the nearby bushes and began to wail in a loud singsong. [852] The children present screamed from fright at this unaccustomed noise, and most of the men left to fix the temporary resting place. During all this, the mother remained motionless under her *mastate* covering on the ground.

On top of the banana leaves and the *burío* strips, the Burier piled the *bijagua* leaves so that they overlapped, making one great sheet. He stamped on them so that they became more pliable. Then he took the corpse bundle which was tied with the hand-rolled cotton string and some vines and placed it on top of the leaves. As he folded the leaves over the bundle, he took the cotton from the stick and placed

764 it in between them. He tied the whole twelve times around and once down the center with the *burio*. The wailing of the mourner continued. The Burier next took a pole and laid it lengthwise down the center of the body tying the bundle to it but leaving a piece projecting at each end to serve as a handle. His helper took the fire from where it had been used to flex the leaves and added it to the
[775] ceremonial one which had the food for the dead beside it.

At this moment, the mourner came into the house and seeing what was taking place, yelled in a frightful voice and again disappeared into the bush screaming her singsong chant. She soon returned and gazed at the body bundle which lay wrapped and tied to the stick on top of a banana leaf.

The apprentice and the Burier cleared the remaining banana leaves from the screen, the Burier alone putting them in a pile in a plantain patch adjoining the house. He then took three cockroaches and wrapped them in a small leaf placing the whole in between the
[825] leaves of the body bundle. This was supposed to rid the house of roaches for at least six months.

The apprentice took the objects from beside the ceremonial fire, leaving the gourd with water and the leaf with *chilate*. The Burier took the clothes of the girl and a stick. He put some of the *chilate* within the leaves of the body bundle but left the greater portion with the water at the spot where the child died as
[775] food for the spirit which they believe returns to the house for three days after death. During this period, it always makes noise and has been known to molest the household.

The Burier and the apprentice set forth with the corpse, food, and personal effects of the dead. On the way to the place where the body was to be left, wherever a path crossed the main trail, sticks were cut to bar the
[775] possibility of the spirit wandering from the road when going from the resting place of the body to the home. The procession went to a thicket about 500 yards from the dwelling. Here a pretense was made to bury the bundle, the earth and stones being lightly put aside so that a shallow depression remained at the roots of the thorny bushes.

[777] [184] On the Pacific side, cemeteries have been

764 blessed by the Roman Catholic priest, and the
[797] dead are buried in the earth shortly after life
[184] ceases. The medicine man and the Burier are the only persons to touch the body, however. The preparations, including a funeral feast and the blocking of cross roads on the main trail, are carried out by both Bribri and Cabécar with much of the detail noted in Talamanca.

[184] A plank of wood under the body, chiefly in Ujarrás, or the body wrapped in *bijagua* leaves or a cloth were the usual procedures on the Pacific side before placing the dead in the grave. The writer was present, however, at
[177] Cabagra in 1956 when a coffin was used for the first time. The school gave the planks and nails and lent the hammer for its manufacture. A description of this death and burial follows.

As soon as the woman died, a rope wick was lighted by the body. Everything immedi-
768 ately around the deceased, such as her bed
764 which was made of cane poles and a reed mattress, a sack which was over the bed and upon which she lay, were removed by the Burier. On this occasion there were three Buriers and one apprentice. The bed and mattress were thrown over a cliff, and the sack was used to line the coffin. The corpse
764 was wrapped in a cheap cotton blanket by the Buriers and put in the coffin. The best dress of the departed, one of blue cotton cloth with yellow dots, was placed on top of the wrapped body and the planks for the cover were nailed on.

During this whole procedure, the family disappeared and none of the stand-bys would look at what was happening. When the coffin was ready, a girl took branches which had been cut for the purpose and outlined a path stretching from both doors of the house to the main trail. The Buriers then tied the coffin onto a litter with rope. As soon as this was done, the girl went ahead down the trail to the cemetery, blocking any opening in the path with branches. When a river had to be crossed, branches were placed on the rocks and at the shallow edges to mark the way so that the soul could
[775] not stray on its journey back to the house from the grave. The Buriers followed with the coffin. One carried a wooden cross, a lighted wick made of *mastate* (*see* Bark Cloth), and an unlighted candle.

At the cemetery, the wick and the candle

764 were placed at one end of the spot where the grave was to be dug in such a manner that when the wick burned out the candle lighted. At the other end, the cross was put up. When the hole was ready, the coffin was lowered and covered with dirt. Then everyone returned to their respective houses except the few people who had been near the woman at death or had accidentally touched anything near her after she died. In this case, there were only the Buriers, the apprentice, and one man.

[783] [756] These persons were considered unclean and had to be purified. The medicine man, who was also a Burier but had not assisted at the death, took over. First, he had them bathe in the river, and then, before entering the house, he put hot water in cups made of *bijagua* leaves and poured it over their hands and arms up to their elbows. Inside, chocolate, yuca, and [775] maize were left in gourds for the soul to eat when it returned in the night, and there it [765] stayed for nine days. A feast was prepared for [777] the ninth day and the motions of saying the rosary were carried out as no one really knew the entire prayer.

765 On the tenth day, the *seté ɨrwak* ceremony was observed. Fire was lighted with a stone and *cabuya* (*see* Fibers) wick. This was taken to the cemetery. Among the Talamancan Bribri there is a similar ritual, but the fire must be of cacao wood. Then four cacao beans, four grains of white maize, four *ayote* [825] (pumpkin) seeds, four roosters (because the dead was female, chickens are for the males), and four gourds of chicha were placed in the house for the departed soul. The number is [801] important as *sibu* (*see* Theological Beliefs) is supposed to have put four of everything in the world. The task of the Singer was performed [767] by the medicine man and the Buriers, four in all. The history of the deceased was chanted: [533] how she looked; what she did; how she played and planted; where she went on vacations or trips; what she bought and had; in truth, everything pertaining to her life. During this chant the medicine man and the Burier remained apart on two benches placed at the west. This ceremony began at 3:00 P.M. and ended at 11:00 P.M. with a feast of yuca, *tiquizque*, meat, chocolate, and chicha.

Funeral and Bone Burial. Attention has already been called to the custom of burying the bones

765 of an individual a year or more after death. The best description of such an event is pre-
114 sented by Gabb who assisted at the bone burial
765 of the last famous "King of Talamanca,"
[643] Santiago. This has the historic value of an eyewitness report of a ceremony which today is impossible to duplicate, and forms an essential contribution to the cultural background of these people.[113]

765 Only in upper Talamanca and upper Chir-
[184] ripó is this type of funeral still practised, and
765 at that secretly, because it is prohibited by the Costa Rican authorities. The dwelling of
[756] the medicine man takes the place of the "casa grande" or big house which was used for the purpose of ceremonials in connection with such burials. Here the bones are taken from the leaf bundle and wrapped in *mastate* by the Burier. Then this is placed on a long bench
533 beside the doorway. The medicine man sings,
765 mentioning *sibu* and recounting the life of the deceased and all his actions, for example: how he planted, worked, what he did, and where he went. The song also gives the reason for his death. If the dead was female, the song
[535] recounts her doings. A feast follows and sometimes a dance.[114] To the beat of drums (*see*
765 Musical Instruments) and rattles, the people and the medicine man accompany the Buriers
• [764] who carry the bone bundle to the graveyard. Generally, this is situated on a ridge or near the headwaters of a stream. Here are located the clan graves known as *pų*. These are deep, round holes lined with four planks of an ex-
[824] tremely hard wood (*Xamboxylum* sp. called *surí* in Cabécar) which does not rot easily. The Bribri line the bottom with stones, but the Cabécar do not bother to do this. The Bribri are more particular than the Cabécar in that the bones should not in any way touch the earth. An additional plank is inclined over the top as further protection. Each clan has
[614] its own grave which is used until it is full.
[178] Today, however, clans that are allowed to inter-marry are buried in the same shaft. The Burier removes the planks of the grave and puts the bone package in with his hands while the medicine man sings, explaining that now the soul has gone and will never return. After-
[273] wards, he arranges the planks as before. Chicha

[113] Gabb, 1875, pp. 500-503.
[114] Pittier, 1938.

dance which was performed in a circle by men and women with one person singing but the whole group joining in the chorus. The song recounted the experiences during a hunt.

There are various dances held in connection with death and burial but they are seldom seen today outside of upper Talamanca.

Pittier[208] mentions a bone dance performed at the time of secondary burial by men if the deceased was an adult and by women if a child. The bone dance witnessed by the writer was carried out by a line of women and one of men. The person taking the place of the Singer (*see* Death) chanted the life history of the departed, and kept time with a gourd rattle. His four assistants in the line of men had drums under their arms which they beat as they danced.

A different bone dance which is a remnant of a war dance with trophy heads is occasionally performed when the medicine man is feeling particularly sure of himself and wants to celebrate. Men and women form a circle with interlocked arms. It is said that skulls were once balanced on the arms. Today, nothing is placed there. The men sing and the women join in the chorus singing *ékéké* meaning "good" or "well."

Songs. All sacred songs are basically Cabécar even though they may be sung in Bribri. The Medicine Man and sometimes the Burier sing these songs which are usually in ancient Cabécar and are not understood by the masses.

Lay songs are common to the Bribri and very rare among the Cabécar. The Bribri delight in inventing songs to fit the occasion. Both men and women like to sing and do so on the slightest provocation when working, bathing, washing, or minding the baby. The addition of words only for their sound is characteristic. Likewise, many Térraba words are found in Bribri songs, the meaning of which is unknown to the singer. In fact, the sung language permits all sorts of liberties as well as having a certain vocabulary of its own.

western Panama. The traditional home of the Bribri is in northwest Panama. *See* Stone, 1952, p. 252.

[207] Segarra y Julia, 1907, pp. 594–95.

[208] Pittier, 1938, pp. 25–26.

LINGUISTIC TEXTS

*539

30. Cemetery Song (*Bribri*) (Version 1)

1. [355] [like] a man
Let's try,
Let's not worry, brave says,
Boy for whom.

2. In the afternoon, in the morning,
Like an alligator,
A strong boy.
In the afternoon, like a jaguar,
Like an alligator,
Let's try,
Like *serike, serike.*

3. [like] a jaguar, like he himself,[356]
Let's try,
Boy let's not worry,
Don't be afraid
For whom do you come?

4. When *serike*, man, boy,
To bring stones,
Now man, now for whom boy like a man,

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30. apú tsak

1. jéikíjéojé° webLasą jé°
amąó-eo, jéreigeLa° jé°
ké-seéndiar, diLo jé° chege,
jé° aLa-webLa jé° šiqurą, jé°

2. tšąL-jtą, jé° bLuLáme jéjéjá,°
toLók-eą jé°,
aLa-igeLa jé°.
tšąL-jtą jé°, numu-eą, jé°
toLók-eą jé°,
mąą-eo jé°,
tserkes-eą serike jé°.

3. nuj-namą[357] jé° wak-eą jé°,
ąmąu-eo jé° jéjé° kirigi° jéjé°,
aLa-webLa jé° ké-ędiar jé°,
ké-suar jé°
šiqrwa jé° kdo jé°?

4. serke jé° miktą jé°, webLa jé° kebinjé°, aLa-webLa,
jé° ják sák jé°,
webLa igą, jé° šiqrwa jé° aLa-webLa igą jé° webLa-eą jé°,

[764]

[355] This is a song used for carrying or hauling heavy logs or stones to the cemetery. Almost every other word is an exclamation. Such words are indicated in the linguistic text by an asterisk.
[356] La, the jaguar.
[357] A Cabécar manner of saying *di-namą*.

6: Stone E-5 (1956-1959) 1962

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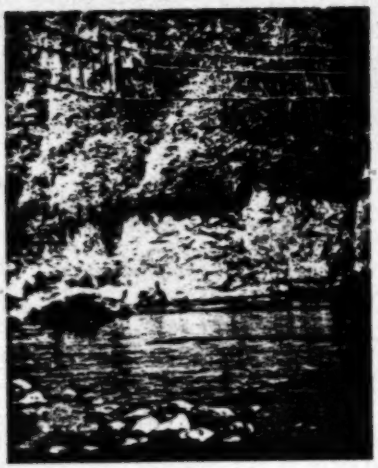

a

b

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778

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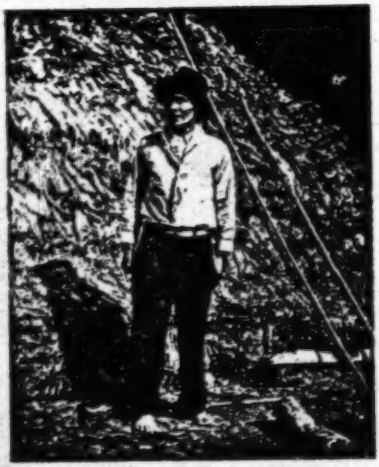

d

a, Vine bridge, Alta Talamanca (photograph courtesy of Gonzalo Martinez). b, Articles to accompany the dead at first burial, Cabécar, Alta Cost. c, Cabécar medicine man with staff, Talamanca. d, Bribri medicine man, Talamanca.

[END PLATE 10]